

## EV INTAKE Evidence Introduction

### A. SCOPE

It is the policy of the Washoe County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Division to carefully secure and maintain all items of evidence and other property entrusted to our care. The requirements of criminal proceedings as well as modern professional standards demand that all evidence received and released is properly handled and inventoried and that the Chain of Custody is maintained. Evidence clerks are accountable for the control and storage of all property accepted by or stored within the Evidence Section of the Washoe County Sheriff's Office.

### B. DEFINITIONS

- B.1 Chain of Custody - the continuity of the custody of physical evidence, from the time of original collection to the time of final disposition, in written or electronic format, which may be introduced into a judicial proceeding.
- B.2 Electronic Chain of Custody – the continuity of the custody of physical evidence, from the time it is accepted into the Forensic Science Division Evidence Section until the return of the item to the originating agency or its final disposition by Washoe County Sheriff's Office.
- B.3 Evidence - any substance or item seized or recovered in conjunction with the investigation of a criminal offense.
- B.4 Evidence Intake Area - the outer room of the Evidence Section where the evidence intake lockers, supplies, and evidence log book are located.
- B.5 Evidence Intake Locker - a numbered, individually keyed locker located in the evidence intake area, designed for the secure storage of evidence.
- B.6 Evidence Log - Washoe County Sheriff's Office form S-10G, a three-part form designed to enter all control numbers for a single case that are being submitted to the evidence section.
- B.7 Evidence Log Book - Washoe County Sheriff's Office form S-309, a log book located in the evidence intake area in which all items of evidence or other property from outside agencies are logged prior to depositing those items into an evidence locker.
- B.8 Evidence Packaging Materials - materials provided within the evidence receiving area to allow the correct packaging and chain of custody of items taken as evidence, found property, and safekeeping.
- B.9 Examination Request Form - Washoe County Sheriff's Office form S-168, a two- or three-part form designed to be attached to any item of evidence or other property submitted to the Forensic Science Division for examination, designed to record information about the item and the type of examination requested.
- B.10 Evidence Section - The evidence intake, storage, and holding areas located within the confines of the Forensic Science Division.
- B.11 Evidence Sheet - Washoe County Sheriff's Office form S-299, a sheet of paper designed to be attached to the container holding an item of evidence or other property, such as an

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envelope, paper bag or box, designed to record information about the item and to maintain a written chain of custody. Each evidence sheet bears an individual control number.

- B.12 Found Property - an item of property that has been located and turned over to the custody of the Sheriff while an attempt is made to locate the rightful owner. Found property is not an item of evidentiary value.
- B.13 Impound Lot - the storage lot located behind Housing Unit 10 at 911 Parr Boulevard, which is used to store large items of evidence or other property such as vehicles.
- B.14 Safekeeping - an item of property taken during the course of an investigation by a law enforcement officer for the purpose of safeguarding the property until it can be claimed by the rightful owner or to safeguard the welfare of other persons by removing the item from its location.
- B.15 Impound Lot Items - items taken as evidence, found property, or safekeeping that are too large to be stored within the confines of the Evidence section.

### **C. RESPONSIBILITY**

- C.1 Evidence clerks are accountable for the control and storage of all property accepted by or stored within the Evidence Section.
- C.2 Upon arrival for duty each morning, it is the duty of the evidence clerk to empty the lockers designated for incoming evidence and to [log such evidence](#) into the evidence computer system (BEAST).
- C.3 Upon the initial receipt of an item of evidence, it is the responsibility of the evidence clerk to sign the Chain of Custody and, upon acceptance of the evidence, record each movement on the Electronic Chain of Custody.
- C.4 It is the responsibility of the evidence clerk to only accept evidence that is properly sealed and labeled according to Evidence policy and procedures.
- C.5 It is the responsibility of the evidence clerk to account for each item, assure that it has been placed into evidence in accordance with Evidence procedures, and to assure that each item of evidence is ultimately placed into the correct storage location.

### **D. SCREENING ITEMS OF INTAKE**

- D.1 Refer to [3928](#) and [4074](#) for procedures that take place after screening.
- D.2 Each item will be examined to determine proper packaging and seal.
  - D.2.1 An item is considered properly packaged if its contents cannot readily escape and entering the container results in obvious damage/alteration to the container or its seal. The evidence seal must have initials across the seal. Evidence tape, packaging tape, and heat seals are all acceptable seals.
  - D.2.2 Each item must have proper identifying information. This includes:
    - D.2.2.1 Agency name and case number
    - D.2.2.2 Item description

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D.2.2.3 Item control number/Agency Item Number or unique identifier

**E. EVIDENCE REFUSAL**

- E.1 If an item is not sealed or does not contain the proper identifying information, it shall not be accepted into the Evidence section without being corrected first.
- E.1.1 The evidence clerk may contact the officer who submitted the item into evidence and instruct them to return to the evidence area to correct the error. In the meantime, the item will be secured in the evidence "correction locker." If the item was received through the mail, then it may be mailed back for correction.
- E.1.1.1 The evidence clerk will email the submitting officer information regarding what corrections are needed. If the officer does not respond, the evidence clerk should attempt to send additional emails including those in the officer's chain of command. If there is no response after 14 days, the evidence clerk should return the items of evidence or notify a supervisor for assistance.
- E.1.1.2 The evidence clerk will maintain copies of communications regarding any corrections. Copies of the communications will be uploaded into the case's case correspondence tab or attachments section in BEAST upon completion of the corrections and acceptance into Evidence. In Washoe County cases, communications will also be forwarded to the records division to be included in the case file.
- E.2 If an item is received requesting analysis outside of the Forensic Science Division's Scope of Work, the evidence clerk will contact a supervisor to verify that the testing cannot be done. The agency will be informed the analysis is not available and the item returned.

**F. STORAGE LOCATION**

- F.1 All items submitted for forensic testing with an evidence examination request form will be stored in areas designated for forensic evidence.
- F.2 Washoe County controlled substances, both those intended for testing and those intended only for storage, will be stored in the "drug room."
- F.2.1 The drug room is also used to store Washoe County items containing currency and valuable items such as jewelry. Currency should be stored on shelf 360 and jewelry should be stored on shelf 361, as space allows.
- F.3 Firearms will be stored in the designated firearm locations. There are separate firearm locations for Washoe County items and for outside agency items.
- F.4 Latent prints are stored in shelf location B – bin marked "Latents Shelf B".
- F.5 Arson/ignitable liquids must be properly packaged in an arson bag or arson can before storing them in the refrigerator.
- F.6 Biological/biohazard items may be stored in the refrigerator and freezers as space allows.
- F.7 Oversized items such as vehicles and bicycles may be stored in the impound lot.

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